


# **CENTRE OF INDIAN TRADE UNIONS**

*THIRD CONFERENCE*

## **GENERAL REPORT**

  
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**SHANMUKHANAND HALL**

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## GENERAL SECRETARY'S REPORT

Comrades,

Our President, Com. B. T. Ranadive has dealt in his Presidential address with the deepening economic crisis with its attendant sufferings heaped on the working people, and the Govt.'s policies. Hence, I want to deal in this report the lessons that we have to draw of these struggles that have taken place since the second Conference.

The line of united actions, of unity for struggle that we have pursued has produced big results and it is time for us to understand the changes that have occurred in the course of struggle—changes in the character of the struggle itself. Unless this is done our efforts and understanding will fall far short of what is required to build a united movement of resistance.

More than two million workers have waged the strike struggle every year for the last three years. No other section of the Indian people has been in such continuous conflict as the working class, and also the employees. With the growth of unity and united struggles the sweep and extent has been immense.

### STRUGGLE AGAINST CRISIS

Local struggles are often being replaced by united industrywise struggles on State levels—statewise struggles protest actions have become more common.

Then there have been all India calls for protest action which have been responded to by the workers. There was a prolonged all-India strike of the railway workers and earlier of the Jute workers.

The sense of unity and the confidence engendered by it

have enlarged the area and scope of the trade union action.

In the course of the developing economic situation and the fight against it the struggles are undergoing an important transformation. From immediate issues affecting wages, bonus, D.A. of one or the other section of industry, the struggle raises the demands of a general character—which affect not only the workers but other sections of society. High prices of food, rationing, wage-freeze, need-based wage. In effect it is becoming more a general struggle against the burdens of the crisis placed on the entire working class and society.

However among the workers and other participants the understanding that we are fighting only for a particular demand still continues. The fight against present policies as such and the struggle for alternative policies is not there in their consciousness.

## ALL SECTIONS JOIN

Just because of the crisis every section of urban toilers is forced into the arena. Employees—Central Government and State, L.I.C. and mercantile, professionals and salaried officials, teachers and professors all are in the fighting arena for their own demands or for common protest action. They are joined by the working women and housewives. The struggle initiated by the working class merges into the common struggle of all sections in the cities.

The radicalisation and the left character of the united movement is growingly seen in the fact that resolutions and demands against American imperialism, foreign capital and monopolists, for the nationalisation of these—find easy acceptance. The desire and urgency for united actions spread and it does not remain confined to calls from a few central organisations. Initiative and action develop in States and localities where there may be hardly any organisations affilia-

ted to any central organisation. They now involve not only the organisations belonging to the central trade unions but other federations, organisations not affiliated to any central organisation.

The two outstanding examples of united action committees embodying new sweep were the NCCRS and the anti—Wage Freeze National Campaign Committee.

The wide response to the call for unity is the result of the worsening economic conditions and the need for unity felt by the workers, our line reflects the reality of the class situation. The need for unity is growingly felt as class situation. The need for unity is growingly felt as the attacks of the employers and the Govt. increase.

## INDEPENDENT ACTIVITY

A very important feature of these united struggles is that most of them have had to face heavy repression. In local as well as State and all-India conflicts the working class has now to face unceasing repression, with all civil liberties and democratic rights attacked. This fact gives a radical political edge to the movement helping it to take it out of the framework of economic and local demands.

The basis of the successes achieved by us is the continuous independent activity of our trade unions, capacity to have direct access to the mass and approach it for action. But for this the reformist and revisionist leaders would not have easily budged from their anti-struggle position. This has meant appeals from and to the top while all the while working at the base ; where this latter has been neglected either the united action has not come about or has become anemic and formal. We have succeeded in formally raising the demands of the peasantry in some of the united actions and strikes. In the united jute strike of this year as well as last

year the demand for a fair price for the jute growers and for nationalisation was raised and popularised by us. In the May 1973 strike in Maharashtra, lakhs of workers came out in support of famine stricken peasantry and they enabled 13 lakh agricultural workers in famine relief to strike the next day.

## WIDE VACILLATION

A characteristic feature of the situation is the wide vacillation and swing from one position to another of the revisionist leaders of the AITUC and sections of the INTUC. The mass swerve towards action is growingly causing the breakdown of traditional barriers raised by the Government and the reformists to divide the working class. The capacity to oppose struggles through these organisations at times of crisis is dwindling. Yet the organisational pull continues when the struggle is over or compromised. They are compelled to manoeuvre, not to oppose openly but sabotage from inside. It often appears that after the withdrawal or a defeat of struggle they continue to retain an important part of their influence,

The vacillation especially of the AITUC leaders depend on the policy of the Right C. P. its shifts and emphasis and the pressures exerted by the workers'. The INTUC leaders are more and more being firmly tied by their party's anti-working class policy and are asked to take a line of confrontation with the workers. Even then local unions, units, individuals and followers break through the cordon and join the struggle,

The HMS locally Joins action as in Bombay, but its main organised strength is kept away. Among its constituents, the AIRF initiated the railway struggle and formed the National Campaign Committee.

## FEAR OF CONTAMINATION

Our allies in the UCTU have been more or less firm active participants in the united struggle. They together with us form the main core of united action. Nonetheless in united mass action we often find that our allies do not pull their full strength in mass demonstrations and meetings. In Bombay, Maharashtra, west Bengal, it has been often found that the main mass addressed in meetings is the mass round the CITU, the other organisations not encouraging their mass to join the common meeting. The fear of 'contamination' of ideological influence of growing feeling of unity being developed, of the artificial barriers completely collapsing haunts the minds of some of the leaders. This results in obstructing the process of united struggles and accentuation of the movement.

It must be however recorded that our allies in the UCTU, etc. do pull their strength for common action and bandh though not for the common meetings and demonstrations.

These complaints are primarily against the AITUC leaders. They are often formally with us without working actively for the action. They are there for addressing common meeting, but do not bring their own following. This is in line with their outlook of looking upon united actions as an evil which cannot be avoided. Recently in consonance with the Vijayawada Resolution of the Right C. P. Congress they have taken an openly anti-struggle stand.

We have had to carry forward our activities in diverse conditions. It cannot be said that we have always understood the changing needs and successfully met the designs of the opponents of struggles with counter-manoeuvres,

## LIKELY MISTAKES

In these days when the working class masses are incessantly engaged in struggle, when their spontaneous anger and the lash of economic situation is egging lakhs to seek action there are two types of mistakes that are possible. Firstly to overestimate our own strength and neglect the struggle for unity, thereby often landing ourselves in trouble or reducing the sweep of the movement. Some such development took place in connection with the strike call of Central Govt. employees in 1974. (2) The second mistake is to wait too much on the goodwill and willingness of the reformist leaders, forgetting the welling discontent below. This slackens independent activity at the base, once again undermining the strength of the united struggle.

There have been instances when our comrades fall victims to provocations. On other occasions they remain firm and inspite of provocation carry the struggle for unity. Both instances took place in Bombay. In 1973, the AITUC leaders of the Girni Kamgar Union suddenly called for a strike of textile workers without consulting us. Provoked by this, we took a wrong stand, which was further seen from the fact that the response to the strike was good. On another occasion, the HMP leaders suddenly broke away from the common call. They announced another date and our comrades took a correct attitude, continued our call with other allies but also latter supported the call given by HMP.

There are occasions on which we are unable to meet the manoeuvres of the reformist leaders of the INTUC and are compelled into action at a time not of our choosing, i. e. not favourable to the workers. This happened in 1975 jute strike of W. Bengal.

Ignorance about recessionary conditions, failure to teach

the workers before hand about choosing favourable situation for action often lands in failure to prevent the mischief from the reformists.

The conduct of the united struggles, its agitation on common platform determines how far the workers will gain in consciousness. The reformists often lay down reactionary conditions for joining common action ; some times they are accepted. Some times the line of least resistance is followed and our propaganda and agitation may hardly differ from the others. The full use of the common demands is sometimes not made and like the reformist leaders attentions is often concentrated on some immediate economic issue. Above all, often big mass struggles are conducted without drawing into their organisation widely representative strike committees preventing the development of the rank and file leadership. The entire conduct of the strike often becomes an affair of the top leaders of a few organisation and the mass below is not made to participate in the conduct of mass action and is not made to assume the responsibility of leadership. This suits the interests of the reformist and revisionist leaders who desire nothing more than a bureaucratic set-up to lead the struggles.

These are some of our shortcomings and experiences. They must be concretised, analysed and lessons drawn to see that we overcome them. without this, we will not be able to meet the organisational and ideological needs of leadership of the new phase of the struggle.

Comrades, let me mention some of the important state-wide, industrywise and country-wide strikes.

The two lakh cotton textile workers strike of Maharashtra, the one and a half lakh textile workers' strike of Tamilnadu in the beginning of 1974, the Delhi Textile workers' strike, the sugar mill workers strike of Tamilnadu, statewide electricity workers' strike in Kerala, Haryana & Punjab, the All India Jute workers' strike of 1974, the two lakh jute workers' strike of 1975, the state wide struggle of workers in the Road

Transport, Plantation, Coir, etc. in Kerala are some of the examples of such state wide struggles. Above all there was the historic all India Railway workers' strike.

Now let me deal with our experience in forging unity and the different ways in which we had to work.

The struggle for unity has assumed various forms. It has taken the form of Campaign Committee for one day action, for demonstrations, it has taken the form of joint committees or consultations for conducting prolonged strikes involving tens of thousands, even lakhs of workers. It has been organised where we are a major force ; it has been organised where we are a minor force.

In the Railways, our adherents were a minor force. The major unions are affiliated to AIRF (there is also the NFIR) and now Dange's IRWF). Some are independent (LRSA) or they have another organisation, confederation. Only a couple of unions excluded from the AIRF are affiliated to the CITU.

Of course there are many leaders in various organisations who appreciate and follow our line of unity.

How then did we carry on the battle of unity ? How could we influence the NCCRS Committee till the last not to surrender ? How did the CITU get its prestige among the railway workers ?

The three week's strike of railwaymen constituted a historic action in the trade union annals of India's working class. This was the first all India railwaymen's strike. Never before did the railwaymen all over India decide to strike unitedly at the call of their organisation. The strike lasted for three weeks, perhaps a world record.

The political significance of this mighty railway strike is that it was made possible by the united front of the left and democratic parties and the mass organisations led by them.

It was made possible because we followed the correct tactics of unity, applied the conditions of the railways. It

is because before and during the strike our comrades worked selflessly and heroically often bearing the brunt of repression and terror in certain localities. They were jailed and beaten. Their families were terrorised. They went underground. But they did not slacken their efforts and emerged as local leaders.

To bring about this united front in action, our comrades working in railways had to adopt correct tactics in the railway trade union and make a correct assessment of the situation from time to time. They had to take note of the influence of reformist leadership, counter its efforts to sabotage united action and pursue methodically and concretely the struggle for unity in various organisations.

## CATEGORYWISE UNION

Our comrades had noted certain important developments affecting the unity of the railway workers three years before the strike. There was a spurt in the formation of section and craft union which later on formed a separate confederation. Our comrades correctly understood that though the craft unions were a step backward from industrial unions on which the AIRF was based, still they could not be boycotted and condemned as they were coming into existence as a protest against the inactivity and criminal failures of some reformist leaders of the AIRF and at the same time, craft and sectional spirit was considered to be harmful to railway workers' unity. Our followers therefore correctly decided to work in these new unions and in the course of action and struggles bring about unity between different sections. The rise of these categorywise unions soon led to rise of struggle and actions and our comrades fully participated in them. These actions began to be developed over the heads of the recognised reformist leadership and showed the resistance of the working class to anti-struggle policies of the leaders.

## RISING STRUGGLES

Inside the unions affiliated to the Railway Federations also local actions began to develop frequently and our adherents supported them, led them, for which they were often expelled by the reformist leaders or the fighting branches were suspended.

While working for these isolated struggles, in the various organisations, our comrades were propagating for the unity of the entire railway workers, and seeking to overcome the sectional spirit.

By 1971-72 the discontent did not confine itself to just forming separate organisation. It began to burst out in local struggles over the heads of the reformist leadership of the AIRF. The locomen's struggle in 1970 in the South was one of the earliest symptoms. While we were endeavouring to see that all sections struck together, it was difficult to restrain important sections in view of the apathetic, hostile and disruptive attitude of the reformist leadership. There was every danger that the energy and anger of the workers might be frittered away in sectional fight and our comrades were doing their best to see that it was channelised into a united struggle.

## LRSA STRIKE

At the time of the Ernakulam Conference of the CITU in April 1973, the situation relating to the Loco Staff appeared to come to a head and there was every possibility of it bursting out into an open struggle over the main issue—hours of work. Exactly at this time the recommendations of the Pay Commission were out and possibilities of mobilising all railwaymen and Central employees were created.

However, the AIRF leaders continued their sabotaging policies and the LRSA rank demanded urgent action. By August the LRSA strike became a fact and ended in a victory for the workers, the government having been forced to negotiate and formally accept reduction of work to 10 hours. This was correctly understood by us as one of the biggest victories of the railway workers since independence. Its importance besides lay in the fact that the concession were secured in a struggle over the heads of the AIRF leaders, the traditional instrument of the collaboration and disruption, carefully nursed by the board over more than three decades.

The militants in the LRSA took prominent part in the three strikes and saved it from many mistakes, born out of categorywise and sectional outlook which gave them a big lever and say in the All india Railway strike.

The year preceeding the May strike saw a rising wave of railway struggles.

## CHANGES IN AIRF

The established leadership maligned these struggles and helped the authorities to crush them. But times were rapidly changing. The simmering discontent among the railwaymen found expression in AIRF annual gathering in Sept. 1973. A resolution for strike was passed and delegates moved with our support an amendment to the General Secretary's report demanding AIRF initiative to unite the resistance of the railway workers by calling a conference of all railway organisations. This was anathema to the old leadership and was against their compact with the railway board. But the spirit of discontent also took care of the old leadership. George Fernandes was elected as the new president. Though the rest of the office bearers remained as before, the election of Fernandes brought about a change which gave further impetus to the railway movement.

These developments inside the AIRF were important for a centralised and co-ordinated development of the struggle. In spite of the discrediting of the reformist leadership and breaking away of sections of railway workers from it, the AIRF and its unions continue to have sufficient hold and without their direct participation on all-India struggle was not possible. Secondly, the other organisations were capable of launching sectional struggles and were not in a position to come together unless the AIRF activated the AIRF ranks and compelled the leaders to prepare for unity and struggle.

We did not underestimate the influence of AIRF because of the outbreak of the struggles over the head of the leadership. On the other hand, we understood that George Fernandes' election had raised fresh hopes among railway workers that the Federation would step into the struggle. At the same time, we did not ignore the role of other organisations in the struggle for unity.

The fight for unity of the AIRF was however not smooth sailing. The old established leadership tried to sabotage it every step and disrupt the struggle. But Fernandes supported by the rising demand for action and unity was able to checkmate the disruption.

## FIGHT FOR UNITY IN OTHER ORGANISATION

We had to play an even more important role in the struggle for unity in other organisations. The workers organised in the LRSA, the Confederation of categorywise unions, etc. had their own prejudices and reservations regarding the AIRF leaders. Many of their leaders mindful of the AIRF and some of them victims of narrow craft outlook wanted to hold off.

Our comrades had to carry on the fight in their organisations. It was made more difficult and complicated by the

persistently disruptive and anti-AIRF line of the Right C. P. Its railway wing had taken a hostile attitude towards strike and co operation with the AIRF. But at the Federation Session in September, they concentrated all their efforts on defeating Fernandes and getting Peter Alvares elected. They were already ready to launch a new railway federation of their own, for which they hoped to secure recognition from the Govt. They were therefore all the more bent upon running down the Federation, keeping others from developing united front with it, after the election of Fernandes.

In the LRSA also there were difficulties, The success of the strike and the attitude taken by the AIRF leaders towards it had strengthened category feeling and added to the bitterness. Some honestly thought that they could win their struggle on their own without support from other railway workers. The Right C. P. and other elements who wanted to sabotage unity were exploiting these feelings to keep the LRSA away from the convention called by the AIRF. Some responsible office-bearers of the organisation had fallen into this trap and were vehemently opposing any understanding or co-operations with the AIRF. However, with many leaders taking a correct line, appealing for unity, the proposal to join the February Convention was at last passed, the majority recognising it to be a correct step.

Similarly, the Confederation leaders were also opposed to joining hands with the AIRF. The Confederation called a meeting of its own in February 1974 in Madras, and invited all the Central Trade Union organisations including the CITU.

Initially in this gathering which was a very big one and representative, there was keen opposition from a strong section to any co-operation with the AIRF. The Right C. P. representatives themselves voiced this opposition and opined that the Confederation should not participate in the February Convention. Perhaps this opinion insistently expressed would

have prevailed though it might not have expressed the real mood of the workers. If this had happened, it would have done a big damage to the workers cause.

But there was a swing in favour of unity after Com. Umanath's powerful appeal for it and one representative organisation after another demanded joint action. The AITUC representative also finally raised his voice in support of unity and the ground was cleared for the February Convention.

## HUNDRED ORGANISATIONS MEET

The AIRF-sponsored convention became a huge demonstration of railway workers' attended by over 3,500 delegates representing about 100 organisations excluding the INTUC controlled NFIR. The CITU along with other organisations was invited to the convention.

The Convention was important for several reasons. It gave concrete shape to the demand of a united struggle that was sweeping the railway workers. It was the first time that the AIRF leaders were joining hands with other organisations and breaking their compact with the Railway Board. The formation of the NCCRS in composition of which Comrade Samar Mukherjee played a role, was not only the organisation of united leadership; it also lessened the dead-weight of old reformist leaders working hand in hand with the authorities from AIRF and other organisations.

Thus the battle for unity along with the fight against its saboteurs was being carried on by us.

The story of the strike, the brutalities perpetrated by the Indira Govt. are well-known to you.

## DURING THE STRIKE

How did we continue the fight for the workers' struggle and unity during the strike? The conduct of the strike was determined by the interplay of the understanding and consci-

ousness of the various constituents that made the NCCRS. Our adherents were not in a decisive strength. Besides several of them were arrested.

It was obvious from the beginning that some constituents did not have a correct estimate of the sweep and strength of the struggle, the repression that was likely to be released and the tenacity with which the workers would face the terror.

In fact, the resistance went beyond our earlier expectations.

The main body of leaders representing the railway unions regarded the strike as an ordinary trade union struggle. This gave it at best seven days to last during which a settlement must be reached. They perhaps thought of a moral victory which would enable them to strengthen the organisation,

That is why on the morrow of the strike, hurried negotiations were started and spurious settlement formula were floated.

What was really needed especially in the first week of the strike was undivided attention to strengthen the strike at the base, to consolidate it against the monstrous repression and rouse the people against its brutalities. The pointless top negotiations side-tracked attention from the main task.

We were not in a position to stop it. We could try to prevent mischief arising from them.

You all know that the call given by the six central organisations to observe 15th May as all-India solidarity for the Rly. strike was a tremendous success. Yet, on the 16th of May in the meeting of the representatives of the Central trade union organisations S. A. Dange of the AITUC came out with the proposal that the strike should be withdrawn. This attempt was frustrated by the CIU representative, i. e. myself.

Comrades, as the strike got prolonged and all kinds of proposals were afloat, our comrades in the NCCRS, Com.

Samar Mukherjee had to bear the burden of fighting the line of disruption and surrender openly advocated by the AITUC leaders. It is largely because of our efforts that the workers were not let down under AITUC pressure. But vacillations increased and on the last occasion, our representative and the AIRF General Secretary stood for continuation of the struggle. The majority swung the other way.

## AITUC LEADERS' BETRAYAL

Though leaders of several constituents vacillated, and some indulged in early negotiations only, the main blow against the strike was delivered by the Right C.P. leaders leading the AITUC. It must be said that the lower ranks of their unions fought the battle loyally but the top leaders virtually acted as the Fifth Column of the Govt. Sailing with the workers' mood for some time but undermining from within and at the crucial period coming out with open strike-breaking. This role they have played in other strikes also. In the Bombay textile strike of 1973 also which united 2½ lakh workers, Dange after making a demagogic speech suddenly struck a compromise with the millowners and scuttled the 32-day old strike. The INTUC leaders often do the same thing. Unable to resist the workers' pressure for action, they appear to support it only to stab it in the back at a critical moment. The same thing was done by the Dock Workers' leaders during the February strike. This technique was seen in its naked form in the railway strike.

The Right C. P. leaders were carrying on secret negotiation with the authorities behind the back of other leaders.

When the Govt. refused to release the arrested leaders of the NCCRS, Dange suggested that those outside should carry on negotiations. This was rejected by the NCCRS. Upon this, he came out with a formula which gave up the major demands—he suggested that bonus, wage revision, etc. should be referred to a committee and negotiations to be resumed.

As the Govt. increased its pressure for total surrender and finding that there could be no unanimity inside the NCCRS for his proposal, Dange suddenly offered to secure an assurance of no victimisation from the Govt. provided the strike was unconditionally withdrawn.

When others queried whether he was carrying on secret negotiations, he withdrew his proposal and joined others in issuing a statement full of scathing attacks on the Govt. He joined with others in issuing a call for an anti-Repression Day. But the very next day, he without consulting any other party or the NCCRS or the Central Trade Unions, issued a press statement proposing that decision regarding withdrawal of strike should be taken zone by zone or group by group, an open proposal for splitting unity and zonal strike-breaking. This did not prevent him from saying that his organisation would carry out of the decision of the NCCRS.

Our demarcation from the position of the compromisers was effectively registered by Com. Samar Mukherjee and Priya Gupta's last statement saying that Samar and he were opposed to unilateral withdrawal put the CITU's position straight before the workers and enhanced its prestige.

It was a mistake to have withdrawn the strike without consulting the workers. It was undemocratic.

This was inevitable because of failure to develop rank and file initiative.

## OUR WEAKNESSES

Our weakness in the railways is further reflected in the fact that we were unable to establish a wide network of NCCRS committees at lower levels. The formation of the NCCRS and the strike engendered such feeling of solidarity and unity that the barriers between organisations and organisations, between party and party had broken down, and with the minimum initiative and organisational strength, there would have been a tremendous response. As matters stood we

were organisationally too weak to utilise the situation for advancing unity. Had we been able to do it, a solid foundation for leadership from below could have been reared.

Our weakness at the base, in the various local coordinating committees, in the unions and organisations, made it impossible for us to organise the participation of lower committees in the decision-making process. Throughout the struggle, the centre of leadership, the focus of leadership did not change, it remained focussed on Fernandes and the top leaders of the NCCRS. A new co-relation of forces, a new balance in the equation of leadership with the lower rungs of leadership taking initiative could not be solved. This is the reason why the withdrawal was so easily accepted by all workers—of course the strike was weakening also. This is why Fernandes continues not only to retain his prestige but has also added to it. His huge rally in Bombay and elsewhere show that the workers do not blame him for the withdrawal. This fact is all important in developing a correct line towards the Socialist leadership.

After the withdrawal, we continued our battle for unity. Our representatives have repeatedly asked for reviving the NCCRS and its convention. Our comrades are trying to fight the fissiparous tendencies developing in each organisation, and the victimisation drive. Once again, it is we who have to raise the banner of unity.

## 1974 BOMBAY TEXTILE STRIKE

Comrades, The 1974 textile strike of Bombay which went on for 42 days constitutes yet another example of our successful fight for united action and the counter-acting of disruptive tactics of the revisionist Dange leadership.

In Bombay, the main bulk of textile workers are under the influence of the Rashtriya M.M. Union. The AITUC affiliated Girni Kamgar Union carrying forward the old influence, is also a force. Our union is making its existence felt day by

day and by its initiative and campaign is able to pressurise the GKU into action. Besides, there is the Kapar Kamgar Sanghatana of Lal Nishan.

By the middle of 1973, with increased inflation and the wage of textile workers lagging behind the wages of some other sections, the question of immediate rise in wage and DA and of need-based wage became live issues. Our Union and the Lal Nishan organisation invited others including the GKU for deciding the strike date,

The revisionists finding that the atmosphere was getting hot attended the meeting and agreed to serve strike notice for 30th December. Perhaps they were still sceptical; therefore, they suggested that the strike notice should be served not by sending a written notice but by organising one-day strike—14 days before the strike date. Unfortunately for them, the 16th Dec. strike was a 100 per cent success. Perhaps their idea was that with a big response for one day protest the Govt. and the mill-owners would oblige them by making substantial concessions.

Now started the real organisational sabotage. Notwithstanding the tremendous demonstration of unity on 16th December, the GKU leaders opposed the formation of a joint strike committee of three organisations.

The workers did not accept the settlement reached with the INTUC Union and the strike started on December 29-30. With two lakh workers on complete strike, the revisionist leaders refused to have a joint strike committee to conduct the strike. This would have come into conflict with their secret negotiations and plans for compromise.

The truth was that Dange was in a hurry to compromise on 6th January, he proposed a petty compromise which was rejected by us.

The strike went on for weeks. But this was a peculiar kind of unity. Everyday there would be two separate meetings on two platforms (CITU & Lal Nishan together). Not only

no joint committee was there. There was no joint meeting. The joint demonstration in front of working mills was the only joint activity. On 16th January, there was a united demonstration before the Maharashtra Sectt. The joint representatives met the Chief Minister and came with empty hands. Then the mass of workers demanded that the separate meetings should stop and only joint meetings should be held. Full three weeks after the start of the strike the first joint meeting was held on 18th of January.

Another three weeks passed. But the strike does not weaken. On the 7th of February, Dange revived his earlier proposals which were again rejected by us. On the 8th of February Dange and his GKU leaders agreed to accept the rejected terms and withdrew the strike on 9th February. The workers finding that the unity had collapsed, went back frustrated.

This is no doubt the old story of heading the struggle to behead it. It shows that the line of the Right C. P.-AITUC leaders will continue to be one of sabotaging the struggle from within. But the question is how are they able to get away with it. No doubt, they are losing their influence rapidly. And that is a phenomenon that is taking place all over India. But we cannot say that after the Bombay strike they have lost their influence so much that they are now a negligible factor in the fight for unity of the textile workers. The process of release from reformist influence is being retarded by old loyalties and faith. What we and the hundreds of militant and advanced workers understand as betrayal is often understood by big sections as a lapse, an error of judgement or even a correct decision by backward workers. That is why again, in Bombay we will have to seek U.F. with AITUC organisation.

The failure to develop a broad-based strike committee again reflects a certain lack of consciousness among the workers due to a failure on our part to educate them. In its

absence unity was represented as only a top unity—of a few leaders without the mass having any role to play in the conduct of the strike.

How far did we carry our proposal for joint strike committee to the masses? To raise issues criticising U. F. partners is very difficult during a struggle. Because of lack of consciousness, it may be misunderstood. But did we raise the issue? If after raising the issue, its importance was not realised by the masses, it means a certain lack of consciousness regarding the functioning of the strike. It is because of this lack that reformists are able to ride roughshod over democratic conduct of unions and actions.

Another question—did we on our own along with Lal Nishan form broad based strike committees, consulting them at every step and developing new leadership. If that had been done, perhaps they would have been activated after the demand in the meeting of 16th January for joint meeting. And it is not clear what we did between 16th, January and 9th. February for having common meeting and committees

### DURGAPUR H. S. E. U. (HINDUSTHAN STEEL EMPLOYEES' UNION)

Comrades, we must all congratulate our Durgapur Union leaders on the way they carried on their fight for uniting the workers, fighting all attempts to isolate them in the midst of semi-fascist terror, murders at the hands of goonda gangs and raids on workers' houses. With the office of the union still closed due to goonda attacks, with the administration and Congress union and gangsters all out to utilise every false step and with the opportunist AITUC leaders serving servilely the Govt.'s aims, our comrades have pursued a line of working for unity, which has foiled all enemy designs. Here the main problem was how to keep contact with the mass of workers

and how to approach the workers under INTUC influence in conditions of terror.

The provocation started very early. In spite of the fact that ours was the only recognised union, the authorities got up a tripartite plant level committee giving a status to the INTUC. The idea was to pass the initiative to the INTUC. It was also thought that we would refuse this erosion of our status as the sole recognised union and boycott the offer. Knowing the designs of the authorities, the political situation and the terror and understanding the need to approach the the mass of workers including those under INTUC influence our comrades accepted the proposal and tried to turn the committee itself into a weapon of creating atmosphere favourable for unity. While we fought all anti-working class proposals we suggested many proposals in the interest of the workers and asked the INTUC, AITUC and others to support them. Simultaneously we supported strike actions in which the INTUC workers got involved and made it difficult for the leaders to retreat. The sum total was that in the end INTUC leaders withdrew from the tripartite committee which failed to serve its original purpose of isolating us. Unable to hold meetings, unable to function from the office, with recognition virtually withdrawn, the union comrades carried on the work directly in the plant and utilised all legal opportunities to strengthen unity in Durgapur and carry it to other steel plants.

The representatives of HSEU, Durgapur functioning on the wage negotiating committee on steel carried on a dogged battle in the committee where not only the employers but the representatives of the INTUC and AITUC were ranged against them. Our union prepared detailed demands, prepared comprehensive arguments and made a strong case for revision of wages on the lines suggested by us. The proceedings of the committee came to be reported to the workers which made it difficult for the compromisers to reach an

understanding with the authorities. The wage question gave us an opportunity to appeal to the broader sections including the INTUC and helped the cause of unity. Thanks to our efforts, our unity appeal has reached Bhilai, Jamshedpur, Rourkella, in fact, all the steel centres.

In passing I may mention yet another achievement of our Durgapur comrades. They took initiative in organising the Kisan Sabha in nearby areas and succeeded very well. May I add also that same consciousness was shown by our tea plantation workers of West Bengal who also took the lead in organising Kishan Sabha in some localities.

Thanks to our efforts for unity, the INTUC and AITUC leaders on the committee are now talking of a common stand. The 26th July Convention Committee which is an expression of the growing unity of steel workers has increased its prestige and becoming an important weapon in uniting the workers in all steel plants.

Equally important has been the work of our union leaders on the standardisation committee and the job evaluation. Finding that the committee cannot be used for attacking the working class despite the presence of representatives of the authorities, the authorities are now repudiating them. In the midst of terror, the Durgapur union has kept afloat the banners of unity and led strike actions in adverse conditions also. The results of its steadfast devotion to the cause of the workers is witnessed in elections to various bodies, when the elections are fair. In June 1973 for instance, in the elections for the Sports Committee, in the Alloy Steel Plant, HSEU got 60 per cent vote and the INTUC 30 per cent and AITUC 10 per cent. This was in the background of continuous terror to which the Alloy Steel Plant workers were subjected.

Comrades, again how is it that despite the terror against us by the Congress Govt., the repeated betrayal by the INTUC leaders, a section of the workers still continue to follow it apart from terror and corruption, the political influ-

ence of the National Congress over a section of the workers continues to be capitalised by the INTUC leaders. This is a fact which has to be reckoned with and which can be changed only by a rapid process of working class disillusionment with the Congress policies. The INTUC besides appears to have support from certain sections, small in number, but occupying a strategic position in production and able to paralyse the working of the plant.

Comrades, the strikes, protests and mass actions of the working class are bound to galvanise large sections of the population. The united economic strikes of the working class play a role in moving the rural masses. The united strike of the jute workers championed the demand for a fair price to the jute grower. In May 1973, the united trade union committee in Bombay gave a call for protest action against the treatment given to the rural masses on famine relief. And it called on the lakhs of agricultural workers and poor peasants on relief work to strike work which they did.

#### JUTE STRIKE :

Comrades, the experience of the two mighty strikes of the jute workers headed by our Bengal Chatkal Mazdoor Union is equally illuminating. The strength and power of the CITU is being seen in the fact that it is associated with almost all the bigger strike struggles of the period, in many of which it is a major partner.

The two jute strikes of W. Bengal involving two lakh workers on each occasion have an importance of their own. They were taking place not only in the context of semi-fascist terror, but precisely in some of the areas direct terror. During the entire period of three years since the terror started and during the many weeks that the two strikes continued there would be no meeting, no demonstration, no open union activity in Barrackpore area and some of the areas where thousands of jute workers dwell. And yet the two strikes

were completely successful cent per cent workers participating in them and the 1974 strike lasted for 34 days and that of 1975 strike continued for 46 long days.

The source of the terror and repression against the workers and the union is of course the Congress party and its Govt. yet we had to seek united front with the INTUC, the trade union wing of the Congress party.

Despite the rapidly developing discontent developing among the jute workers over unfulfilled demands. The INTUC and the Congress rulers thought in 1974 that the disruptive influence of the INTUC leaders supported by widespread terror would coerce the workers and us into accepting any agreement signed by the INTUC leaders betrayed openly and signed an agreement all alone at the behest of the IJMA and the Congress Labour Minister. In the process of negotiations the INTUC leadership got isolated from its ally, the AITUC.

Its president refused to sign the agreement. The AITUC leaders repudiated it and joined the strike. It was conducted by the CITU along with the two UTUC, AITUC and section of the HMS.

The strike began by isolating the INTUC and forging the unity of all other centres of trade union organisations. It must be noted with pride that this united strike was the first all India Jute workers' strike. It spread to all States except Andhra.

It is obvious that unless our CITU union had found ways and methods of doing immense mass work despite the terror in occupied areas the strike would not have been successful. We were the major force and without us there was no question of a strike.

The fiasco of the INTUC agreement and the successful strike was a big political defeat inflicted on the terror and the Congress labour policies by the united jute workers. It was an open defeat of the policy of false, fake concessions

and clandestine agreements. The strike could be completely successful despite the atmosphere of terror because it carried with it the strong confidence enjoyed by the united front of several central trade unions. Big as our strength is, it would not have been possible for us to organise such a complete strike and conduct it for five weeks without the feeling of unity which only a united front could produce. The second reason for its wide sweep was that the concrete demands appealed to all sections irrespective of their affiliations.

The strike was withdrawn after some economic gains and other gains were secured. It virtually repudiated the treacherous agreement signed by the INTUC. The workers therefore had besides the sense of a moral and political victory of having defeated the game of the disruptors and asserted the strength of their organisation.

During the strike agitation the demands of the jute peasant for the nationalisation of jute industry and of foreign trade in jute products was given prominence. They were not treated as just formalities. This should be no doubt an important factor in raising the consciousness of the workers.

However, there are no detailed reports, how we conducted our agitation, whether there were any deficiencies in anything, how the other partners conducted their agitation and what political advance could be registered. It was acknowledged on all hands that our influence, the influence of the CITU and its affiliate increased very much and the mass of workers increasingly looked upon us as the champions.

One basic defect seems to have remained which the union leaders noted. Broad based strike committees in each and every mill could not be formed. This main instrument of developing rank and file leadership of carrying central decision to the mass and educating the mass could not be forged every where.

The united strike of 1974 marked a great advance in the working class struggles in W. Bengal. It added to the strength of our union. Isolated the INTUC leaders and thousands could see in practice the treacherous character of the INTUC and AITUC leaders. It temporarily broke the alliance of the INTUC, AITUC and HMS which with Govt. help creates enormous difficulties in the way of working class action.

The post-strike tasks demanded immediate education and training of the new cadres so that they could take leadership in the next struggles.

The 1975 jute strike, another glorious struggle against the broken promises of the Govt. and the IJMA exhibited new manoeuvres on the part of the INTUC and showed that the reformist leaders are unscrupulous enough to put on a radical mask to cheat the workers.

Finding that their influence was dwindling and this was dangerous for the money bags certain leaders of the INTUC decided to play a pro-strike role. They knew we were preparing for a struggle as none of our demands have been met. Again some leaders of the AITUC and the HMS joined the INTUC. In November the INTUC and the other two organisations told the workers to go on strike from 6th. January. We had to take notice of this because though the INTUC leaders had betrayed last time, they were still a factor in the unity of the workers. We were appealing to them to sit together and decide upon common action. But they avoided. At one time in August 1974 they agreed for a common token strike and then suddenly declared for an indefinite strike from 6th. January.

We decided to support the call for 6th January. However, as later events showed January was not a favourable time for strike. The world recession was in full swing, the American orders had gone down. But it was thought orders from other countries would make up for this shortage

—a wrong understanding of the situation. In fact, stocks had accumulated and the INTUC leaders were taking a radical pose to bail the IJMA out of the difficult position. It has been a failing of our trade unions that they very rarely study the concrete economic situation and the situation in the industry. The workers are rarely told that strike being a part of class struggle there are favourable and unfavourable occasions for it. The workers get easily carried away by the call to action when his condition deteriorates very much. It is difficult at the last juncture to educate the worker in this regard. Nevertheless, we along with the AITUC leaders urged the INTUC leaders to postpone the strike for a few months. But they had made up their minds.

Though there was this time complete unity of the organisations, the strike started in unfavourable conditions. The staying power was on the side of the employers. The workers heroically carried on for 46 days. So long as the INTUC was in the strike there was not much repression. But later on the usual repression started.

This time it was the clear combine of IJMA, Congress Govt. and INTUC—the latter acting from within.

Again at the time of the withdrawal the combination of INTUC, AITUC and HMS came forward and withdrew the strike. The others continued it for two more days and then withdrew it. Thus the clever manoeuvrings of the reformist leaders of the INTUC turned the most united strike of the workers into an action without much immediate result. These new tricks of the INTUC directed to sidetrack the radical discontentment should be properly studied. One should not be misled into thinking that they are a revolt against anti-struggle policy of the ruling party.

We have seen these same tactics adopted by the reformist leaders of the AITUC.

The strike would have resulted in a big reverse for the workers had our union leadership not kept itself in close con-

tact with the mass through our factory cadres and explained to them from the beginning the handicaps under which the strike was being conducted. Thanks to this a large mass of workers knew the game of the INTUC leaders and none blamed us. Reports on day to day developments were given at the executive meeting which helped local leadership to tackle any situation arising out of the strike. All this made the workers more conscious politically.

This time broad-based strike committees in most of the mills were formed.

Comrades, it is amazing that during the entire period of 46 days there was no call for a solidarity strike to the rest of the industrial workers. The jute workers fought on their own. It seems this was not done because the INTUC leaders were opposed to it. While it is true that during the course of a strike differences among leading bodies often lead demoralisation among workers and the sense of unity must be preserved, the reformists should not be permitted to take advantage of the situation to lay down harmful conditions. If the INTUC leaders did not agree to the call it should have been given by the united left trade unions. The fighting workers could have easily understood the differences over this issue.

In the united front, vigilance is required to overcome the harmful policies and tactics of the reformist partners.

What has been the experience in these struggles? Despite the desperate attempts of the disruptors, provided the CITU unions choose the most burning issues properly, carried on the campaign on them, made proper preparations, the workers belonging to the AITUC and even the INTUC compelled the leaderships to join the struggles. In some cases, it happened that the leaderships of these unions did not join the struggle, but the workers of their unions joined the struggle en masse.

### THE DELHI STRUGGLE

In the Delhi textile strike, the CITU union had taken the correct issue of wages. Long preparations were made by means

of gate meetings and mass meetings. A Convention was called to which the AITUC and the INTUC unions were invited. The fact of invitation to these unions was made widely known to the workers, who were urged to make the leadership respond. The result was that a section of the leadership of the INTUC joined the convention. Through the AITUC leadership was adamant and would not join the convention, many activists of the AITUC union, defying the leadership, joined the convention, which fixed the day of strike.

After the convention also repeated open calls were made to the AITUC and the INTUC leadership to join the strike.

The result of this was that despite the opposition of the AITUC union, the strike was a complete success and ultimately a good agreement was signed. The AITUC union was the officially recognised union and at the time of settlement, when the management wanted to get the agreement signed by the AITUC, such was the anger of the workers that over 3,000 workers surrounded the officials and management and said with one voice that they would continue the strike if the AITUC union was brought into the settlement. Ultimately the management and the Govt. were forced to sign with the CITU Union which had been recognised !

Similarly, in the State Transport Workers' strike in Kerala unity was established on the initiative of the CITU with the AITUC and four other unions and the strike started on 3-4th September on the demand for  $14\frac{1}{2}$  per cent bonus as against  $11\frac{1}{2}$  per cent declared by the Govt. The Right Communist Chief Minister declared that if a higher bonus was paid he would resign. The Congress and Right Communist leaderships pressurised the AITUC and INTUC leaderships to withdraw the strike. Despite this treachery the Govt. had to come down and settle for a higher bonus. The Chief Minister had to eat the humble pie before the might of the united Transport Workers and his threat of resignation remained an empty one.

The Tamilnadu State-wide Textile workers strike, the initiative was again taken by the CITU and demands popularised among workers. The AITUC, HMS and INTUC were approached for joint action. The AITUC and HMS agreed and joint Action Committee was set up with them. During the strike, the HMS and AITUC were secretly negotiating with the milliowners and the Govt. and had come to an understanding, the CITU exposed these confabulations, publicly among the workers and prevented the sell-out. For this, the CITU was expelled from the Action Committee. However, the strike continued and ultimately a more favourable settlement was arrived at. Later, the INTUC issued a leaflet which was widely distributed which stated that but for the CITU's exposure the HMS would have betrayed the workers. The INTUC, unable to withstand the pressure, from the workers at the last moment, tried to disrupt the struggle by calling for a strike 15 days later. But such was the tempo worked up during the period that the INTUC workers simply ignored the INTUC leadership and joined the strike, which was total and complete.

### THE STRUGGLE FOR ALL INDIA UNITY

The national council of trade unions formed by the AITUC, INTUC and HMS with official patronage has become completely defunct.

On the other hand, the UCTU organised a convention in New Delhi in July 1973 in which it focussed the two demands "Bonus for all and need based minimum wage." The convention was a great success and it rejected the central pay commission's recommendations.

It is true that the AITUC and INTUC leaders refused to respond and hobnobbed with the Govt. and settled for a paltry sum in modification of the pay commission's recommendations. However, many conventions were organised in most States on the demands 'Bonus for all and need based minimum wage.'

The slogan of need-based minimum wage was taken up by all sections of workers. In the negotiations that took place on revision of wage structure, this was made the main demand by the workers in their charter of demands.

The CITU tried its best to get the unions in the public sector undertakings together so that the workers could negotiate from a position of strength. Where all the public sector unions formed a Co-ordination Committee for the purpose of joint negotiations.

The AITUC and INTUC, however, scuttled the move by entering into an agreement in the BHEL. The management of the other public sector undertakings tried to thrust this agreement on the workers. It was only in those cases where the CITU unions were also represented in the negotiations as in the case of HMT, that although we were not able to change the basic structure of the agreement, yet we were able to force the management to agree to enhance fringe benefits such as the percentage of house rent allowance etc.

After the Rly. strike was suppressed, the Govt. was emboldened to launch an offensive on the entire working class by an Ordinance, later enacted by the Parliament as law, which is known as the Wage-Freeze Act. It is known that the decision was taken before the Rly. strike. The Rly. workers thus fought the battle of the Central Govt. employees organisations. In order to defeat this tremendous offensive, an Anti-Freeze convention was held in August 1974. Although the AITUC, INTUC and HMS officialy boycotted the convention, it evoked tremendous response. 1,400 delegates representing various unions, State and Central Govt. employees' organisations, Federations not affiliated to any Central T. U. organisations etc. and even unions affiliated to the HMS and a section of the HMS working committee participated in the convention. The convention decided to hold conventions and demonstrations against the Wage-Freeze Act in States, regions and wherever possible

conduct local or State-wide protest strikes. Over 200 conventions have been held throughout the country. It is also significant that AITUC leadership, due to fear of isolation from their own workers, participated in some States and regional conventions. Four State-wide strikes had taken place, one each in Maharashtra and Rajasthan and two in Kerala. In the Maharashtra strike and in one of the Kerala strikes, the AITUC leadership also had to take part.

This struggle, which is going on is a struggle of the entire working class, together with all the salaried employees in Govt. services, public sector undertakings like the LIC and Bank employees and commercial establishments, teachers, etc. against the anti-working class, anti-people policies of the Central Govt. and as such, assumes tremendous importance.

It is necessary to state that the CITU units every where took the initiative in organising the anti-freeze conventions and actions.

In this period several actions of the working class have taken place on questions not directly connected with the economic demands in a particular unit or industry such as strikes against high prices. Apart from the state wide strikes on the questions of cut in ration in Kerala, one day strike in W. Bengal demanding among other things fixation of remunerative prices for the jute growers, Bombay strike on high prices, in Bangalore an anti-price Committee of Trade Unions was formed with the public sector unions and the Central Trade Unions. This committee carried on a sustained and massive campaign against rising prices, held one of the biggest demonstrations outside the Vidhan Sabha (legislature and sectt.) and also one day protest strike. These activities had such an impact throughout the state of Karnataka that in many towns and villages spontaneous demonstrations and even dehoarding of foodgrains by the poorer sections of the people took place facing brutal police repression.

## DEMOCRATIC FUNCTIONING

The task of democratisation of the trade unions, through which alone the consciousness of the mass of workers could be raised to a high level is still being neglected. In many unions, the pattern of leader-followers' still continues. It is absolutely essential to group the militants thrown up during the struggles, constantly educate them, consult them on every important step, and through them educate the mass of workers on multifarious problems facing the working class,—not only the particular problems in the factory, but more important than that on the problems and tasks facing the working class, the Govt.'s entire economic and political policies and the foremost role the working class can play in defeating these policies.

This alone is real trade union democracy and not just holding formal meetings of the Executive Committee and taking formal decisions. This alone will rapidly enable us to draw into the service of the working class and democratic movement innumerable cadres, the lack of which prevents the expansion of our activities, despite the tremendous scope and opportunities that have opened up before us.

### NEGLECT OF WORKERS' EDUCATION

How sadly we neglect the education of the mass of workers can be seen from a glaring instance. The W. Bengal unit of the CITU, with the help of the Centre, had done a magnificent job in exposing the fraud committed by the Simla Bureau in compiling the working class cost of indices. As a result, all the other T. U. Centres also joined and forced the Govt. in appointing a committee to go into the question. Our contentions were upheld and the cost of living index figures had to be corrected. How the W. Bengal Govt. utilised the DIR to deny the workers the full benefits of these findings is dealt with in Com. Pandhe's report. But such an important fraud, which exposes how the Govt. of India has

been throughout acting in the interests of the bosses, was not made the property of the mass of workers. No Bengali pamphlet has been issued.

## TOP NEGOTIATIONS—NEGLECT OF MASS

We have earlier noted how the Delhi textile workers' strike was correctly planned and prepared for and hence it proved to be completely successful in isolating the disruptors. But in the case of the general strike call of January 1975 against wage freeze, all these were not done. In the earlier period, every effort was made by building unity from below, so that the reluctant AITUC unit of Delhi at last joined the convention against wage freeze. At the Convention itself, correct U. F. tactics were adopted and an agreed resolution calling upon the workers to prepare for a general strike was placed before the convention. The entire delegates including those of the AITUC, forced the Steering Committee, which included the representatives of the AITUC to fix the date of the General Strike. But subsequently, when the AITUC backed out of the decision and refused to give the strike call, our comrades did not take pains to carry on a raging campaign on the basis of the Resolution of the Convention. This lack of preparation on our part resulted in not being able to overcome the efforts of the disruptors and the strike was far below expectations.

Another important failure is to build united committees at the lower levels during united struggles. Only through such committees, it is possible for us to inform the mass of workers the day to day developments, the intrigues of the disruptors who have reluctantly joined the strike, and foil their attempts at disruption. We have seen how in the case of the timely exposure of the transactions and their secret deals with the Govt. and management, we were able to prevent a sell-out in the case of the Tamilnadu Textile workers' strike. But this has not always been so. And in many

cases not building up such a wide network of committees at the lower level has helped the collaborators in forcing settlements at levels far lower than warranted by the correlation of forces.

Another tactic of the class collaborators when they agree to join struggles is to impose a condition that no mass meeting of workers should be held by the constituent unions, but meetings should be held only by the Action Committee. And invariably the Action Committees do not hold mass meetings. This is fertile ground for betrayal and sellout. Such restrictions must be opposed tooth and nail.

These weaknesses must be quickly overcome. The last two years have been years of great struggles. As noted earlier, these struggles have outgrown the elementary consciousness of workers in a factory vs. the employer and the beginning of the consciousness of the working class versus the employing class as represented by the Govt. have already appeared.

As a result of the role played by the CITU and its unions its prestige among all workers has increased. Even though substantial sections may not have given up their organisational affiliations to other Central organisations, they regard the CITU as a trusted friend and reliable champion of their cause.

Some unions in Ghaziabad and Faridabad have come over to the CITU from AITUC. In Western U. P. and Haryana also many CITU unions function. In many other places, workers owing affiliation to AITUC, INTUC and other Centres have left their leadership and walked over to the CITU. I am giving these as examples only. If our State Committees send the Central Office information in this regard, I could have given you the full list of such unions which would show the extent of erosion of confidence of the followers of the AITUC and INTUC in their leadership. In far away places in Madhya Pradesh, the message of

unity and struggle has found an echo in the hearts of many workers and spontaneously unions have been formed which have got affiliated with the CITU.

It is necessary to remember that all this has happened in the midst of furious attacks by the Govt. and determined efforts at disruption by its collaborators. The semi-fascist terror continues unabated in W. Bengal.

These struggles have given a big opportunity to organisationally consolidate the trade unions affiliated to the CITU. I must say that we are neglecting this aspect. At the conclusion of every struggle, if we group the militants thrown up and launch a determined drive for membership, the organisational position of the CITU would be far greater than what it is today. In future at least, our comrades must pay utmost attention to the question of organisational consolidation of the increasing influence of the CITU.

## TWO LINES

The struggle between the two lines—the line of unity and struggle and the line of disruption and brutal suppression of struggles—has become more intense. We see such struggle not only in those unions directly led by the CITU, but also in all the fighting organisations of the workers and employees—among the LIC employees, among the Central and State Govt. employees, among the Rly. workers, the L. R. S. etc. In many of these the disruptors have suffered defeat. Among the Central Govt. employees, the disruptors have been forced to enter into negotiations for restoring unity. The CITU welcomes the initiative of these talks and earnestly hopes that before long unity will be restored in their ranks.

Having failed in preventing united struggles, the Govt. in its despair got the INTUC adopt an official resolution at its last session in Bombay in January this year. The Prime Minister personally attended the session. The Resolution called upon the Trade Unions, in view of the economic

crisis through which the country is passing, to eschew strikes for the next three years. Of course, it appealed to the employers not to resort to lockout.

Comrades, we must realise that the line of unity and struggle is our class line and the line of disruption and class collaboration is the line of the bourgeoisie and its collaborators. Every united struggle of the workers in any unit or industry is a blow struck at the line of class collaboration and disruption. When these leaders join the united struggle they are not happy at heart and do everything to prevent the struggle from going forward to its full fruition. Every effort on our part to defeat their line therefore not only strengthens our line of class struggle, but also brings new strength to our organisation.

That is why we must persist in this line and strive every nerve to carry it forward. At the same time, it must be realised that opportunities for such united struggles are growing. The Govt. cannot find a way out of the deepening crisis, within the framework of its present policies, except by attacking the working class and all sections of the toiling people. Even small industrialists are going down in this crisis due to the measures of the Govt. Hence, whatever attempts the Govt. and the employers might make to sow disruption in the working class through its proteges like the INTUC and AITUC, the objective conditions are such that the appeal for unity and united struggle will receive still greater response than before from the mass of workers. It is therefore of utmost importance that we encourage the building of fraternal relations among the workers and seize every opportunity for building unity and launching united struggles, and thereby frustrate the attempts to divide the working class.

#### THE IMPACT OF WORKING CLASS STRUGGLES IN THE DEMOCRATIC MOVEMENT

The last two years have been turbulent years. Millions of people, apart from the working class such as LIC and Bank

employees, State and Central Government employees, teachers and college professors, medicos, nurses, students and agricultural workers and peasants have come out in struggles facing heavy repression.

The struggles that we have carried on in this period have, no doubt, had their impress on this vast movement of the people. No longer are the reactionary parties in a position to mouth and put forward their avowed reactionary slogans in favour of the monopolists, landlords and increasing collaboration with the imperialists. This is seen in the vague character of demands evolved by the Co-Ordination Committee set up by Shri Jai Prakash Narayan. While it contains such concrete demands as need—based minimum wage, implementation of land reforms, trade union rights, democratic rights, end to the state of emergency, repeal of the MISA and DIR, etc., it contains also vague demands such as end to corruption, reducing inequality in income, etc.

## POPULAR DEMOCRATIC MOVEMENTS

The working class cannot be apathetic to the movements of the people. Every act of repression resorted to against the students, teachers, state and central government employees and other sections of the struggling people must be answered by protest actions by the working class. It is absolutely wrong to think that the working class can be mobilised to fight only on their own economic demands.

I must also point out that our organisation in most parts of the country has done very little by way of responding to international developments. The historic victory of the people of Vietnam and Cambodia should have brought out the working class on the streets in their thousands hailing the victory. The big blows struck at U. S. imperialism should inspire our working class and working people to intensify their struggle against the machinations of U. S. imperialists in the sub-continent. Imperialism is facing an all round crisis and

the people of our country, together with the working class and the peoples of the under-developed countries can take giant strides in the struggle against exploitation of man by man. This great weakness in rousing proletarian international consciousness of the working class must be quickly overcome.

While supporting every democratic demand and participating in the struggle for such demands, the working class must mobilise itself and march forward. That is why, comrades, the CITU gave a call to mobilise all forces that can be mobilised to lift the state of emergency, repeal of the DIR and MISA and restore civil liberties and end the semifascist terror in W. Bengal. That is why we joined all those forces that rallied to celebrate April 6th, as Anti-emergency, and DIR and MISA Day through-out the country. The working class is the worst victim of the DIR and MISA and the suppression of democratic rights and civil liberties. Today, a Govt, bent upon establishing one party dictatorship has to resort to the very same repressive measures against every opponent who threatens to upset its drive to one party dictatorship. That is why the struggle has become wider and we must use this opportunity to unite with all forces subjected to this attack and strive for the widest mobilisation of the people against those measures that are the concomitants of a police state.

Comrades, it is in this context of the stirrings in all sections of the people, and of the movement of all sections of the people that the struggle for alternative policies not only assumes supreme importance but has become insistent and urgent.

### THE RALLYING PLATFORM

In this background, the platform of the anti-wage freeze convention of August 1974 is a further milestone in this struggle. The platform unanimously adopted at that convention which was the widest mobilisation of trade union

representatives, gives the concrete programme and alternative policies whose fulfilment alone will take the country forward to a democratic life and have the way for socialism. It is necessary to reiterate that alternative programme which runs thus :

1. Immediately taking possession of all the stock, hidden and open, of foodgrains and essential commodities from the big landholders, and wholesalers and their distribution through a public distribution system supervised by people's committees.

2. Take over of the wholesale trade of foodgrains by compulsorily procuring all the marketable surplus from big landholders and of essential commodities from their producers and arranging their equitable distribution at controlled rates through a Public distributions system supervised by People's Committees.

3. Demonetization of currencies of higher denomination and freezing of Bank deposits above a certain limit.

4. Abolition and drastic reduction of excise and other imposts on articles of mass consumption and an end to deficit financing.

5. Take over of big business and monopoly Houses both Indian and Foreign.

6. Moratorium on all foreign debt repayments.

7. Re-opening of all closed factories and units and full utilisation of installed capacity.

8. Immediate steps to abolish landlordism and distribution of all lands of big landholders to agricultural labourers and poor peasants through Committees of Poor Peasants and agricultural labourers.

9. Fixation of equitable wage for workers in the unorganised and agricultural sectors and its implementation,

10. End of corruption and bureaucratism at all levels.

11. Immediate withdrawal of wage freeze measures and conceding the demand for a need-based minimum wage.

12. An end to the anti working class policy, repressive measures and laws and victimisation and establishment of industrial relation on a democratic basis.

13. Jobs for all or unemployment relief.

It will be seen that the programme is the only way by which corruption can be ended, inequalities can be reduced, minimum conditions for the people ensured, unemployment can be lessened, all available resources for development can be mobilised and the country can embark upon building a prosperous life for our people.

The adoption of the platform by the Convention gives us the opportunity to propagate it and educate the working class not only from our CITU platform but from all joint trade union platforms.

In the conventions and rallies against the wage freeze, it must be admitted that this alternative platform has not been popularised sufficiently. While fighting against every attack on the working class,—against wage freeze, against retrenchment, against lay-offs, etc. it is absolutely necessary to bring before the working class that there is no way out for the sufferings of the people within the framework of the basic policies of the Govt. The platform that the trade union organisations have evolved is the only democratic alternative if the people have to go forward and the country is to be saved from the dangers of neo-colonialism.

This way, today, the widest mobilisation of all sections of the working class and employees on the basis of this programme has become most insistent if the people who fired with idealism, and fed up with the present state of affairs are coming into the streets and are on the move, are not to be cheated and led astray by forces who want to take advantage of the upsurge but who are bent upon keeping the status-quo economically and socially.

Above all, it has become an urgent task to make the working masses realise the need and through the advanced

sections organise the agricultural labourers and peasants. Efforts made in this regard in some places have given some results. But these are few and far between. A concerted effort must be made all over the country so that the vast peasant and agricultural labour masses take their place in the struggle.

Moreover, the soaring prices of food grains and every other commodity of mass consumption and the growing unemployment gives us the opportunity to educate the working class that the problems of the working class cannot be solved without an attack on the landlords and the grip of the wholesale merchants over the peasants as well as the common people. It is of utmost importance that the working class not only voices the demands of the peasants and agricultural labourers but they actively support their struggles.

I have only to add that intensification of the class struggle,—not in the narrow sense of struggle for economic demands alone but its all-sided development—has become the most urgent task. Only by fulfilling this task the working class will earn the esteem of all the toiling masses on the march and be able to head the battle for democracy and prevent its betrayal.

Hence, whatever the price we may have to pay for it, at this III Conference we shall pledge to carry on this struggle unswervingly.

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